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ABSTRACT

Since the Indochinese War ended in 1975, over one million Southeast Asians have entered the United States as refugees. School psychologists, counselors, and other professionals may utilize the ecological approach in order to more effectively serve this population. The ecological approach allows more accurate assessment of the student's psychological functioning and a broader understanding of crucial issues affecting the student. family. The student's functioning is evaluated within the context of his/her mesosystem (immediate family, extended family, neighborhood, school, and other networks), macrosystem (community or culture), and exosystems (society/social structures). Cultural conflicts in any of these systems affect the student. Counselors must take into account between-group differences, within-group differences, gender differences, and class differences. Factors such as Southeast Asians' strong ideas concerning education and acculturation mean that an understanding of these various contexts can be used to develop psychoeducational interventions that address the different levels of the system. A case study is presented to illustrate how a school psychologist uses the ecological model. (Contains 34 references.) (RJM)

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PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS WITH SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDENTS: AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

School personnel are confronting the challenge of serving an increasing number of students from Southeast Asian backgrounds. We have developed an ecological approach in order to serve these students sensitively and effectively. The approach begins by understanding the student's socio-cultural context, including socioeconomic status, the impact of acculturation on the student and his/her family, and the "Catch 22" situation (when less acculturated, these students have difficulty in school and society; when more acculturated, they have conflicts at home) that immigrant children are experiencing. A case study illustrates how a school psychologist applied this ecological model in practice.

Key Words: Southeast Asian, psychoeducational intervention, ecological approach

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ABSTRACT

School personnel are confronting the challenge of serving an increasing number of students from Southeast Asian backgrounds. We have developed an ecological approach in order to serve these students sensitively and effectively. The approach begins by understanding the student's socio-cultural context, including socioeconomic status, the impact of acculturation on the student and his/her family, and the "Catch 22" situation (when less acculturated, these students have difficulty in school and society; when more acculturated, they have conflicts at home) that immigrant children are experiencing. A case study illustrates how a school psychologist applied this ecological model in practice.

PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS WITH SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDENTS: AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

Since the Indochinese War ended in 1975, over one million Southeast Asians have entered the United States as refugees. The majority of them are now at the child-bearing age, and the second generation has entered schools at every level. This influx of Southeast Asians has contributed to the rapid growth of the Asian population in the United States in recent years. Totaling 7,272,662 in 1990, Asian/Pacific Americans have become the fastest growing minority group in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau, 1990). The Asian population is projected to increase to 10 million by the year 2000, approaching four percent of the national population (Pang, 1990).

Recent studies (Rumbaut & Ima, 1987; Dornbush, Prescott & Ritter, 1987) have indicated that despite their short history in the United States, lack of English proficiency, and low socioeconomic status, Southeast Asians as a group have surpassed their white majority peers in academic achievement. However, many Southeast Asians have been found to exhibit anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to multiple losses, pre-settlement trauma, post-settlement cultural shock, absence of emotional support of loved ones, language differences, and unemployment or underemployment (Kroll, Habenicht, Mckenzie, Yang ,1989; Mattson, 1993). For children and adolescents, adjustment difficulties may be manifested through a lack of interest in school, psychosomatic complaints, difficulty in concentration, and antisocial behaviors. Truancy, school drop-outs, juvenile delinquency, and youth gang activities are on the rise in communities with sizable Southeast Asian populations.

The stress related to the acculturation process and its effects on students' psychological and academic functioning (Liu, 1995) is generally neglected by school personnel. This paper presents an ecological approach of psychoeducational intervention for Southeast Asian students, with an emphasis on integrating the family into the process and on the effects of acculturation.

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

The ecological approach presented here is influenced by the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979). In adopting his system perspective, our view is that psychological evaluation of a student's functioning is done within the context of his/her mesosystem (immediate family, extended family, neighborhood, school, and other networks), macrosystem (community or culture), and exosystems (society/social structures). He or she is embedded within these interconnected and dynamic systems. When there are cultural conflicts among the various systems (e.g., family, community, and school), the conflicts affect the microsystem (the student). Both the student and the systems are continually changing. Thus, the proposed psycho-educational intervention is conceptualized within this context. This approach allows more accurate assessment of the student's psychological functioning and a broader understanding of crucial issues affecting the student. Application of this approach in psychoeducational intervention with Southeast Asian students includes collecting and integrating information from various aspects of the sociocultural context and then developing intervention procedures based on understanding of both this context and the student.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIOCULTURAL BACKGROUNDS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICANS

Value differences between Southeast Asian parents and Western culture and differences in the rate of acculturation between parents and teenage children are among the primary sources of conflict for these families. Though they may speak different languages or subscribe to different religions, Southeast Asian refugees share similar experiences of pre-settlement trauma and post-settlement adjustment difficulties which have a strong impact on their psychosocial adjustment in the United States (Champion, 1989). Meanwhile, effective intervention services to

students, families, and teachers also require school psychologists to be aware of differences among various Southeast Asian subgroups. Whereas the mainstream American culture tends to emphasize individualism, competitiveness, and the pursuit of happiness in the "here and now," Asian cultures value self-discipline, hard work, respect for authority, conciliation rather than confrontation, fulfillment of role-related responsibilities, and the pursuit of happiness in the future. Asian cultures differ in the concept of self and patterns of self other relationships (Nilchaikovit, Hill, & Holland, 1993). Individuals strive to attain harmony in social relationships which are hierarchical and role-oriented (Li & Liu, 1993).

DIVERSITY WITHIN SOUTHEAST-ASIAN CULTURES

Between-Group Differences

Southeast Asian Americans are a heterogeneous group due to differences in the country of birth, ethnic identities, and variations in their degree of cultural and social assimilation into American society. The major ethnic groups include Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong and ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia. Inter-racial marriages result in a number of Eurasian Americans, Asian-Latin Americans, Asian-Black Americans, Asian-Native Americans, and others. Many families also include intra-racial marriages among different Asian American subgroups (Pang, 1990). Thus, ethnic and cultural identity is an area which school personnel must investigate very carefully because of the intricate differences among Asian cultures.

Within-Group Differences

The within-group differences are also important to take into consideration (Bennet, 1992). Within-group differences may include differences in ethnicity, religion, class, gender, birth order, political affiliation, regional affiliation, pre-settlement lifestyles, and exposure to

Western culture, all of which may play a critical role in many areas of psychological functioning of Southeast Asian refugees.

Gender Differences

In traditional Southeast Asian families, males are valued more than females because they are the heirs of family wealth, successors of family business, carriers of family name, and caregivers of parents in their old age. Females are less valued because, once they are married, they are supposed to contribute to the well-being of their husband's families to a greater extent than to their own.

In the United States, Southeast Asian teenage girls from traditional families generally are given more household responsibility but less personal freedom than their male siblings or in comparison with females from the mainstream culture. Their resentment toward gender inequity frequently becomes a source of friction in intergenerational relationships. Yearning for freedom to enjoy the more carefree lifestyle of the adolescent peer culture and refusal to fit into the role of a traditional Asian woman often prompt many of them to resort to aggressive, acting-out behaviors or early marriages as an escape. However, in many Asian cultures, once a female is married, she is expected to be subservient to her husband's parents and perform many household responsibilities not only for her nuclear family, but for her husband's extended family as well, thus substituting one unsatisfying living situation with another.

Mainstream Americans often blame Hmong (an ethnic group from highland Laos) parents for pressuring their daughters to marry at a very young age. Though some marriages are arranged by parents, the majority of early marriages take place because young women either elope with their boyfriends or become pregnant while unmarried. When this happens, Hmong

cultural norms as well as pressures from family and clan members dictate that the marital bond be formally sealed. These situations contribute to the rise of divorce rates among young Americanized Hmong couples.

Class Differences

Southeast Asian immigrants come from different classes and educational backgrounds in their home country. After coming to the United States the former upper and middle class men who felt superior in social states experience dramatic changes of classes. Southeast Asian adult males who lack English proficiency and marketable job skills may suffer a loss of self-esteem and social status in the United States because they can no longer hold prestigious positions or enjoy the high social standing they once had in their native countries. Long periods of unemployment or underemployment and economic dependency on their wives or adult children may result in their loss of status in the family as the provider and decision-maker. They may resort to alcohol or other drugs, gambling, or domestic violence to regain the control they once had. Children from such homes tend to have a higher incidence of social and emotional difficulties.

PARENTS' VALUE FOR EDUCATION

Many Southeast-Asian parents, especially the Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia, tend to support their children's education with personal sacrifices. For instance, parents of modest means may work two jobs, long hours, borrow large sums of money from relatives or friends, or mortgage their house in order to pay for their children's tuition at a prestigious university. These parents may be driven to help their children succeed academically for several reasons. First, academic success can lead to training at a prestigious university in a

potentially lucrative profession (e.g., medicine, engineering, computer science). Second, membership in a prestigious profession guarantees a higher standard of living and social standing in American society. Third, the remainder of the family can depend on financial support and connections with a successful relative to pay for their college tuition or start a business later on. Fourth, the entire extended family will move up the socioeconomic ladder when several offspring all become successful in their respective professions. Finally, Asian parents take enormous pride in their children's success, which becomes a status symbol to them in their social circles. Immigrant Southeast Asian parents also see their children's academic success as a means to a more secure financial future in the adopted country and the only viable way to combat practices of racial discrimination against minority groups.

Southeast Asian parents' emphasis on their children's academic success has other ramifications. Asian parents often impose shame and guilt on their children as a form of control (Wagatsuma & DeVos, 1984). The extraordinary sacrifices many Asian parents have made in order to provide the best possible educational opportunities for their children often lead them to feel entitled to exercise control over their children's lives for long periods of time. Parents control their children's choice of marriage partner by their approval or disapproval. Parents also impose their will on their children in choosing a college major or making a career change.

Impoverished, uneducated Southeast Asian parents from rural backgrounds may want their children to do well in school, but they may not know how to support their children's education. For example, they may not see the importance of assigning less housework to their children on school nights, providing them with a quiet place to study or do homework, and finding academic support for their children from outside resources. For those parents, daily

survival and economic security during retirement often take precedence over their children's education.

IMPACT OF ACCULTURATION ON TRADITIONAL CULTURAL VALUES

Acculturation, in this paper, is defined as a process of change that results from living in a new culture. Stages of acculturation for immigrant families can be viewed as different positions along a continuum (Marina, 1978). The English language, segregation by age, and veneration of youth are factors in American mainstream culture that contribute to the disintegration of immigrant families (Marina, 1978). Immigrant children generally learn the new language much faster than adults, and English becomes the children's language of preference, whereas parents continue to use their native tongues (Marina, 1978). As time progresses, immigrant children are not only busy acquiring language skills of the second language (English), they gradually lose skills associated with the first language. At the same time, parents continue to show preference for the use of the first language. The difference in language use can contribute to communication problems between parents and children, and subsequent family problems. Because of the lack of meaningful interaction among people of different ages in the same family and social gatherings, the extended family may lose the social and psychological prominence it previously had in the homeland.

In the United States, the practice of age segregation has often resulted in immigrant children being encouraged to participate in social activities with mainstream American children of their age in and out of school. Marina (1978) argued that such children-oriented activities socialize immigrant children in isolation from their extended family unit, as well as segregate them by age. Thus, American youth culture begins to exert greater influence on immigrant children than their families and ethnic communities. The responsibility of child-rearing is also shifted from family to institutions, such as schools and youth organizations. As immigrant

parents work long hours for economic survival, their children spend even less time in conjoint family social activities.

Due to long periods of near-exclusive association with American teenagers, immigrant adolescents gradually learn to give more credence to their peers than to their parents. This contrasts with the practice of many traditional cultures in which the elders, not the youth, are revered.

AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF ACCULTURATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL MALADJUSTMENT OF IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

An ecological approach to the study of psychological maladjustment of immigrants/refugees as a function of intergenerational acculturation differences has provided a new perspective on the dynamics of immigrant families. A recent study (Nguyen, 1996) on the relationship between acculturation and adjustment of Vietnamese adolescents suggests a "Catch 22" situation: children with high involvement in Vietnamese culture were at greater risk for emotional distress, whereas those with low involvement in the Vietnamese culture and high involvement in mainstream American culture were at higher risk for family conflicts.

Research on Cuban immigrants of the 1960s and 1970s (Scopetta, King & Szapozcnik, 1975; Szapozcnik, Scopetta & King, 1978; Szapozcnik & Kurtines, 1980; Szapozcnik & Truss, 1978; Szapozcnik, Scopetta, Kurtines & Aranalde, 1978) found that adolescent children of Cuban immigrants acculturated more rapidly than older family members, and the intergenerational acculturation difference became the focus of intergenerational conflicts, which caused maladjustment for both parents and children. In families with the highest acculturation gaps, the highly acculturated youngsters tended to exhibit more antisocial behavior and drug use than their less acculturated peers, whereas their mothers, who acculturated at the slowest

rate, tended to experience difficulty in child-rearing practices, report serious parent-child conflicts, manifest neurotic syndromes, and abuse prescription drugs such as tranquilizers and sedatives. However, in one study (Liu, 1995) Hmong youths who were less acculturated than their parents had greater school maladjustment than their peers, as measured by higher rates of discipline referrals and higher rates of class absences. This study also indicates that acculturation differences between parents and children contribute to school maladjustment.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS:

In Asian American populations, a person's level of acculturation has been viewed as an important variable in determining treatment philosophies (Sue, 1981), psychotherapy styles, community interventions (Sue & Morishima, 1982), and psychiatric treatment decisions (Gaw, 1982). To develop an intervention plan that is effective, practical, and culturally sensitive, school psychologists and counselors must have a thorough understanding of the student's culture, cultural conflicts between home and school, the effect of intergenerational acculturation differences, health status of family members, and available support from the extended family and ethnic community. In working with Southeast Asians the following factors should be considered:

1. Because of some Asian American parents' high concern with their children's academic success, children who do not meet parents' expectations may be at risk often for rejection by their parents, relatives, and members of their ethnic communities. These children also may not be accepted by their majority peers at school because of cultural differences. These feelings of rejection and lack of self-worth are one of the causes of their social, emotional and behavioral difficulties.

2. Southeast Asian parents who are concerned with their economic survival or the pursuit of the "American dream" may work two jobs or long hours in order to provide a more comfortable life for their children. However, they may expect grandparents to care for their children or leave their children alone in the company of TV, movies, and video games. Many of these children are unsupervised or ineffectively supervised with regard to homework completion and leisure activities. Some of them may look for companionship, identity, protection, and power in an ethnic gang. Others may skip classes and/or do poorly in school.

3. Many Southeast Asian parents are not aware that once in the United States they must abide by child neglect and abuse laws, because such laws do not exist in their native countries. School personnel need to become aware of these situations, educate parents on child rights in this country, and help the parents develop workable solutions through the use of interpreters and community leaders as mediators in parent-child conflicts.

4. Uneducated, unacculturated Southeast Asian parents often fail to grasp the importance of talking to their children in order to understand their children's age-appropriate emotional and social needs, as well as peer pressures. Through the use of an interpreter, school psychologists can plan parent education programs to help Southeast Asian parents cope with the physical, emotional, and social changes in their children, and inform them how to access school support services.

5. Southeast Asian Americans tend to rely on family members and close friends for support and advice when experiencing personal or family crises. They have difficulty disclosing personal problems and feelings to strangers. School psychologists and counselors, need to take

the time to build trust with Southeast Asian parents and assure them of the confidential nature of the professional relationship.

6. Older Southeast Asian students frequently experience an identity crisis which affects their self-concept and self-esteem. Although they may be high achievers, their sense of alienation from mainstream American peer culture intensifies the need for recognition and support, which makes Southeast Asian youth gangs very attractive to them. Support programs such as an Asian Club or Multicultural Club often give these students a sense of belonging and ethnic pride and an outlet for discussing cultural conflicts with teachers and non-Asian peers.

7. Counseling strategies that are concrete, rational (e.g., advice-giving) rather than confrontational or non-directive tend to work better with traditional Southeast Asian parents and students because these strategies match with the students'/parents' acculturation level.

8. School personnel need to be aware that many emotional difficulties of Southeast Asian students may be disguised. Overactivity, lethargy, non-communicativeness, sad affect, and physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, stomach aches, eating and sleeping disturbances) should all be investigated for possible psychological causes such as anxiety and depression.

When interacting with Southeast Asian students and families, the following practices are recommended:

o Recognize the diverse ethnic and cultural identities of Southeast Asian Americans. Members of one ethnic group may have animosity toward members of another because of past hostility between the two peoples (e.g., Cambodians and Vietnamese).

o Be sensitive to class and gender segregation in social settings in several Southeast Asian cultures. Children of wealthy or prestigious families may be brought up to believe that

they are inherently superior to those of less fortune and lower ranks. School personnel should not assume that just because there are only two or three Asian students in the entire school, they must feel a sense of kinship and therefore should be grouped together for support and companionship.

The following case illustrates how a school psychologist took sociocultural factors into consideration when working with a Southeast Asian student and his family.

A CASE ILLUSTRATION

Koua*, an 11-year-old Hmong American boy enrolled in the 4th grade at an urban public school, was referred by his teacher because of behavioral problems in the classroom. He is described as an active boy who is frequently off-task, talking, making peers laugh, in conflict with other children, and noncompliant with his teachers. He seldom does his homework. His teacher conferred with his parents through an interpreter, expecting a change in Koua's behavior. However, Koua still exhibits the same problems after the parent-teacher conference.

Ecological Approach to Case

1. In an attempt to understand the perspectives of the people concerned with Koua, the school psychologist collected background information through the review of school records, classroom observations, interviews with his past and present teachers, an interview with his parents through a Hmong Educational Assistant who served as the interpreter, and three interviews with Koua in English (he can communicate freely in English).

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* A pseudonym is used for confidentiality.

2. Family Information: Born in the United States, Koua is the fifth child in a family of nine children ranging in age from 1 to 19. Both of his parents stay at home to take care of the children. The family came to the United States as refugees 15 years ago. Hmong is spoken in the home. The parents know little English, but the children have all learned to communicate in English through school. Very often, the school-age children act as interpreters for the parents. The parents find the boys very rebellious, and Koua does not comply with his parents' requests. Koua's 16 year-old brother is involved with a gang. The parents feel powerless. Koua views his home as crowded and noisy. There is no quiet place for him to sleep or do homework. His parents do not have time for him. Koua admires his oldest brother, who is in college, but this older brother does not visit home very often.

3. Developmental History: According to his father and mother, Koua is a healthy boy who had normal birth and developmental milestones. The time he started walking and talking was similar to his siblings. He eats and sleeps well. He has had no serious medical problems, and has not had any head injury as far as his parents know.

4. Functioning at home: Koua is playful and active at home. Compared to his siblings, Koua seems to have more difficulty following directions. He keeps doing the things that his parents have told him not to do. He has problems with peers for borrowing a toy from a friend and breaking it or forgetting to return it. He has gotten into fights because of that. His parents feel embarrassed when they are called by school officials because of Koua's disruptive behavior or failure to do his work. They feel even worse when they cannot change Koua's behavior or communicate freely with his teachers about interventions.

5. School Information: Koua started Kindergarten in the current school. He has been receiving training in English as a Second Language since Kindergarten, and speech and language therapy since first grade. Placed in a multicultural, mainstreamed classroom, Koua is being removed from his class four times per day for 45 minutes of ESL, 30 minutes of speech and language therapy, 60 minutes of bilingual class, and 45 minutes of computer assisted reading/math instruction through the Chapter 1 program. He frequently gets into conflict with peers (of both Hmong and other ethnic groups) during the transitions of going from one classroom to another. He also loses his notebook or assignment on the way. He often makes his classmates laugh when his teacher is writing on the board. His teachers see him as intelligent but very distractible, disorganized, and immature. He was referred to the Multidisciplinary Team for suspected Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The Multidisciplinary Team also had similar concerns, but his parents were reluctant to seek medical evaluation and treatment for possible ADHD. Behavior modification was the recommended psychological intervention. Koua has been seeing the school psychologist on a bi-weekly basis for a year. During the third grade, Koua "behaved" for a very structured and "strict" Asian female teacher. During the fourth grade, Koua first tested the limits of his "easy-going" new teacher, who was a white female, and then accepted her authority. He acted out when his teacher took a two-month medical leave. He did not accept the substitute teacher at all. He would not do anything for her because he seemed to perceive the substitute teacher as his equal or peer. As a result, he was referred again for psychological intervention.

6. Classroom Observations: When observed in the classroom, Koua was aware that someone was observing. He did everything he was supposed to do. He demonstrated average

reading, writing, and math skills, and excellent art work. However, his teacher later reported that Koua was off-task as soon as the observer left the room.

7. Interview Data: Koua was friendly and talkative during the interviews. He seemed to enjoy the individual attention. He shared his view of the problems: He functions better in a quiet, structured setting with simple, clear, and consistent rules for everybody, much like what he had in his third grade classroom. He has difficulty dealing with transitions and self-monitoring. He feels that his parents can't help him, his teachers confuse him--sometimes the teachers allow kids to have fun, sometimes not, and it is hard for Koua to get the clue--and his peers reject him when he tries to interact with them. (However, Koua's Hmong and American peers often complain that Koua says or does things to provoke them, e.g., commenting on their hair, hiding their pencils, poking, pushing.)

8. Results of Behavioral Rating Scale: The Achenbach Teacher Report Form indicates significant attention and social problems and aggressive behavior when compared with his mainstream American peers. This form was used as a tool during the interview to ask questions systematically. Its results were taken as one source of data for clinical reference. Its standard score was not used because no data about Hmong American children are reported in the standardization sample. However, this information may be considered together with the observations shared by his teachers and parents: Hmong children are usually more quiet and mild in school than their American peers. At home, Koua and his 16-year-old brother are perceived as active and aggressive, while their brothers and sisters are not.

The school psychologist's hypothesis about the referral

The difficulties that Koua, his teachers, and parents are experiencing appear to be a combination of his individual problems (e.g., attention problems), transition issues, and cultural conflicts.

a) Individual problems. Koua's profile resembles one with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (Over the past few years, he has been extremely distractible, disorganized, active, attention-seeking, and has had difficulty following directions or sitting still, noticing social cues, etc.) His impaired peer relations seem to be caused by his hyperactive and aggressive behavior, as well as poor social skills.

b) Transition issues. He functions better in a very structured setting with the least number of transitions. It's very hard for him to go through at least four transitions a day to different classrooms with different rules, different teachers, and different teaching styles while his school is trying to provide him with the ESL, speech and language therapy, and bilingual and reading services he requires. Furthermore, it is difficult for average Hmong children to shift back and forth from the Hmong language and culture at home to the American language and culture at school. It is even harder for a child with attention problems.

c) Cultural conflicts. The difficulties Koua and his parents are experiencing with each other reflect some of the cultural conflicts an immigrant family experiences in this country. It appears that during the acculturation process the family structure has changed. Parents, especially the father, lose the authority status that they used to have in traditional Hmong society, since in this country they are not the "bread winners." They know less about American society than their children and are not able to communicate in English. Meanwhile, children are playing adults' roles such as the interpreter and liaison between parents and the school and the

community. Thus, Koua sees himself as equal to adults. He does not respect his father as the authority in the family. His father feels powerless.

Koua's parents did not follow through on the previous Multidisciplinary Team recommendation of a medical evaluation of suspected ADHD for Koua because the Hmong belief and practice in health and healing are different from Western medicine. First, ADHD is not a familiar concept to Hmong parents. Second, it is hard for a Hmong parent to accept a medical evaluation of his/her child by a Western doctor when the child seems in good physical condition. Before the parents consider the recommendations, the multidisciplinary team needs to develope mutual understanings of cultures and personal trust with the parents.

d) Socioeconomic factors. Socioeconomic factors also contribute to the problem. Koua says that he cannot sleep or concentrate on his homework in his crowded and noisy home. He feels frustrated.

Intervention

The interventions proposed were based on an ecological model. To help Koua, we must work with both his environment and him together.

At the system level:

To eliminate some of the environmental causes (e.g, cultural conflicts, transition issues) and to build a therapeutic system, the following procedures were recommended.

1. Educational sessions on understanding and parenting/teaching children living in the two cultures should be held for teachers and parents. Parent-school partnership meetings may empower Hmong parents through joint decision-making and sharing information about American schools, how they function, their rules, services available to Hmong children and

parents, and parents' rights and duties, etc. His current teachers should consult his third grade teacher on what behavioral management strategies worked for Koua.

2. A collaborative support team consisting of his teachers, parents, assistant principal, school psychologist, and Hmong social worker should be formed and meet--first weekly and then bi-weekly and monthly--to discuss intervention procedures, their effectiveness, and necessary adjustment of the procedures based on Koua's progress. The interventions also must be carried out by the team members cooperatively and consistently.

3. The team needs to discuss how to provide structure for Koua in school and eliminate the overwhelming transitions while accommodating his bilingual and speech/language needs.

4. The Hmong social worker will help the parents find resources for housing and a nearby public library where parents can learn English and children can read or do homework.

5. Meanwhile, Koua's teacher may want to help Koua to find a classmate with whom to do homework.

6. Since Koua is intelligent, active, and artistic, he may become a member of the school art club and/or a helper for his art teacher. Playing an active role in an area where he can demonstrate his talent will help Koua build his self-esteem, use his energy, and get attention in constructive ways.

7. Information on Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and tips for working with children who have attention problems should be shared with all team members.

<u>At the individual level:</u>

First, psychological counseling should occur weekly, along with consultation with parents and teachers on behavior management for children with attention problems at home and school for a month without medical intervention. Culturally-appropriate counseling strategies should be chosen based on Koua's acculturation level (his cultural identity is more on the traditional Hmong end, so that solution-focused counseling may be more effective for him). Specific behavior modification procedures should include sitting next to his teacher and in the least distractible place, making a behavior contract, using a behavior checksheet for self-monitoring, a sign on the desk for Koua and his teacher to remind Koua to stay on task, and a five-minute daily check and reward meeting with his teacher. Social skills training is included in the counseling sessions to improve his peer relations. His big brother and/or other role models in his life are encouraged to spend time with him or call him weekly.

In the event that trying the above interventions for a month results in no significant progress, the team may want to explore the reasons. If attention deficit is the major concern, discuss if medical intervention should be added. The school psychologist and the Hmong social worker may coordinate the family's access to the medical intervention.

Results

The above recommendations were well accepted by all the parties involved. For the first two weeks, the implementation of the intervention was effective, although the classroom transitions were not changed. Koua was not a problem at home or school. The team was very happy. However, Koua regressed by the fourth week because during the third week his teachers and parents could not give him the time and attention they did during the first two weeks, and the interventions were not done completely and consistently. The team evaluated how much time and

attention they could give Koua and wanted to see if adding medical intervention could make life easier for Koua and the people working/living with him. At this time, his father agreed with other team members. (It should be noted that the father, not the mother, came to school each time representing the family and making decisions.) Thus, Koua started taking medication for ADHD.

Koua's teacher noticed a difference in his self-control and attention after taking the medication. Koua also felt it was easier to concentrate. However, he did not like to take the medication every day. He wanted the positive attention that he enjoyed during the first two weeks of the intervention. At this time, the team began brainstorming for an appropriate and practical solution.

SUMMARY

School psychologists, counselors, and other professionals are facing a challenge of serving an increasing number of Southeast Asian students. In order to serve these students sensitively and effectively, we have developed an ecological approach. The approach starts from understanding the student's sociocultural context, including socio-economic status, the impact of acculturation on the student and his/her family, and the "Catch 22" situation (when less acculturated these students have difficulty in school and society; when more acculturated they have conflicts at home) that immigrant children are experiencing. With an understanding of this context, psychoeducational intervention procedures are developed at various levels of the system, that is, the individual, the family, the school, and the community. The case study indicates that the ecological model is a promising approach to serving Southeast Asian students.

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